

# Fact Sheet: World COPD Day - 21 November 2018

- There are 251 million current cases of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in the world.
- 3 million people die each year from COPD.
- COPD is currently the 3rd leading cause of death globally.
- COPD is highly prevalent in low resource countries.
- Exposure to tobacco smoke and other inhaled toxic particles and gases are the main risk factors for COPD.
- Recent research has identified that suboptimal lung growth before and after birth can also increase the risk of COPD later in life.

## Preventing and treating COPD

- Discouraging individuals from starting to smoke tobacco and encouraging smokers to reduce and quit smoking are the first and most important priorities in preventing COPD.
- COPD is diagnosed with a breathing test called spirometry. This test is easy to perform, non-invasive and painless. It takes only few minutes.
- Finding cases early on is very important to prevent disease progression, and this approach may reduce the burden of disease and mortality rates in future.
- People with chronic breathlessness of any type, or cough and sputum production should have a spirometry test.
- Initiatives to reduce the burden of COPD are taking place worldwide, including smoking cessation programmes, fighting against both indoor and outdoor air pollution, as well as examining childhood disadvantage factors (such as parental smoking, lung infections and uncontrolled asthma).
- Although there is no current cure for COPD, action can take place at every stage of the disease.
- Currently available therapies can alleviate the symptoms of breathlessness, cough and sputum production, and disease flare-ups.

## Common symptoms of COPD

- Shortness of breath.
- A repetitive cough.
- Increased phlegm or mucus production.
- Feeling tired.
- More frequent chest infections.
- Taking longer to recover from a cold or chest infection.



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## About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

The [Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American College of Chest Physicians](#) (CHEST), [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), [Asian Pacific Society of Respirology](#) (APSR), [Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax](#) (ALAT), [European Respiratory Society](#) (ERS), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases](#) (The Union), [Pan African Thoracic Society](#) (PATS), [Global Initiative for Asthma](#) (GINA), and the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.

### FIRS calls for these essential actions to reduce the burden of respiratory disease and improve global health:

1. Increase public and policy makers' awareness that respiratory health is essential to global health and that childhood respiratory disease may have long-term negative consequences on adult health by advocating at world health meetings and through publications and media postings.
2. Reduce, and then eliminate, the use of all tobacco products through universal support of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control 3. Adopt WHO standards, at a minimum, to reduce ambient, indoor, and occupational air pollution for all countries.
3. Promote universal access to quality healthcare, including the availability of affordable, quality-assured, essential medicines and universal coverage for childhood and adult immunisations, including new conjugate vaccines by advocacy through WHO and government programmes.
4. Improve early diagnosis of respiratory diseases through improving awareness and access to current procedures and the development of new tools through world health meetings and publications.
5. Increase education and training of health professionals in respiratory disease worldwide through programmes of the FIRS societies, WHO and other governmental and non-governmental organisations.
6. Standardise the monitoring of the prevalence, severity and management of respiratory diseases to enable development of well-informed national strategies through programmes of WHO and governmental and non-governmental organisations.
7. Increase respiratory research to develop programmes, tools and strategies to better prevent and treat respiratory diseases through advocacy for governmental and nongovernmental research organisations.

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